



**Stepping into an unaccustomed role, Task Force 1041 Airmen patrol through a village near Balad Air Base, about 45 miles north of Baghdad. Patrolling “outside the wire” is a job Soldiers normally do. But these security forces troops were on patrol for four months.**

## **Airmen patrol to cut attacks on base**

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332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

**photos by Tech. Sgt. Mike Buytas**

**G**oing “outside the wire” and on patrol was not a job Staff Sgt. Kyle Luker was used to doing. But the security forces troop did that more than 60 times while at Balad Air Base, Iraq.

He and the other security forces Airmen of Task Force 1041 patrolled “to draw the enemy out.” Securing the base meant conducting offensive ground combat operations. But taking the fight to the enemy wasn’t easy, the sergeant from Moody Air Force Base, Ga., said.

“You really never know whom you’re dealing with,” the fire team leader said.

Doing a job normally done by Soldiers, he joined

other Airmen doing new jobs in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

But in the war against insurgents, the battlefield is “asymmetric,” said Lt. Col. Chris Bargery, task force commander. That’s because most strikes against air fields are stand-off attacks. Balad has been the site of frequent mortar attacks by insurgents outside the perimeter fence.

“We can’t stay inside the fence and hope the bad guys go away,” the colonel said. “Hope isn’t effective in preventing attacks, so we go out and take action.”

Airmen patrolled in and around local villages. They tracked terrorists and earned the Iraqis’ support and respect. But mainly they helped stop indi-

rect fire attacks on the base.

“What we’re trained and equipped to do,” said Capt. Warren Cohn, the task force tactical commander from Moody. The Airmen, he said, felt like they were “doing something really important by establishing an environment of safety and freedom.”

On patrol December through March, the Airmen worked for the Army’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team. Patrols reduced attacks, Colonel Bargery said. Soldiers then took over the job again.

Perhaps an unmeasured value of the patrols, Sergeant Luker said — despite the language barrier — was helping Iraqis. Airmen gave them food and made “sure they are safe.” 🦅





**Standing on an armored Humvee (far left), Airmen 1st Class Andrew Hogue checks an ammo belt before going on patrol. A security forces troop (above) hands candy from his military rations to Iraqi children in a village near Balad Air Base. Before each patrol, Airmen (left) gather for a briefing. In this case, the Airmen searched for, and found, an Iraqi insurgent's weapons cache near the base.**





**Staff Sgt. Kyle Luker and Capt. Warren Cohn (far left) clear the house of a suspected Iraqi insurgent during a raid near Balad Air Base. Staff Sgt. Joseph Trumbull (left) looks through items found in the house of an Iraqi insurgent. On another weapons search near the base (below), security forces uncovered a munitions cache. Insurgents make improvised explosive devices with the munitions, which they then use to attack U.S. supply convoys.**

